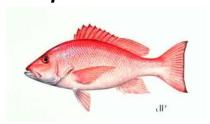
Extension of the Gulf of Mexico Sector Separation Sunset Provision

(Reef Fish Amendment 45)

Frequently Asked Questions

September 2016



What is being proposed in Amendment 45 and the proposed rule?

• To extend red snapper recreational sector separation measures from the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017) to the end of the 2022 fishing year (December 31, 2022).

What is sector separation?

- Sector separation was implemented in May 2015 through Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico.
- This action separated the recreational red snapper sector into two components:
 - The federal for-hire component is comprised of all for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.
 - The private angling component is comprised of private recreational anglers and other for-hire operators who do not have a federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.

Definitions

For-hire refers to charter vessel and headboat operations.

Annual catch target is the acceptable level of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty.

Accountability measures are actions taken if the annual catch limit or quota is exceeded.

- Each component has specific sub-quotas, annual catch targets, and accountability measures.
- The purpose of Amendment 40 was to:
 - Increase the stability of the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector.
 - Provide increased flexibility in future management of the entire recreational red snapper harvesting sector.

- Reduce the chance of recreational quota overruns, which could threaten the rebuilding plan for the red snapper stock.
- Amendment 40 also established a sunset provision where the sector separation provisions would expire at the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017).

Why was the three-year sunset provision put in place in Amendment 40?

- The sunset provision requires the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) to re-evaluate how sector separation is working.
- The three-year sunset provision was considered long enough to allow the Council time to explore other possible management measures, like regional management, that could replace sector separation.
- The three-year time period was considered short enough to create some urgency by the Council to consider other possible management measures to improve red snapper management.

Why did the Council vote to extend the sunset provision?

- The Council is currently working to develop and approve actions to address the management of the charter vessel and headboat fishing within the federal for-hire component (Amendments 41 and 42 to the FMP, respectively).
- These amendments are not expected to be effective until after the 2017 Amendment 40 sunset provision expires.

How can I comment on the rule/amendment?

- Comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule to extend the sunset provision must be received no later than **October 24, 2016**.
- All comments specifically directed to Amendment 45 and proposed rule will be addressed in the final rule.
- Note that if your comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule are the same, you only need to submit one set of comments.
- You may submit comments on Amendment 45 and the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0089, by any of the following methods:
 - Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0089, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
 - Mail: Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Links to additional information on red snapper management and rulemaking

- You may obtain electronic copies of Amendment 45 and the proposed rule from the NOAA Fisheries Web site:
 - http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/am45/index.html
 - or the e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov.

- Information on Amendment 40 and rulemaking can be found at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am4

 O/index.html.
- Information on Amendments 41 and 42 can be found at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable-fisheries/gulf-fisheries/reef-fish/index.htm
- An overview on red snapper recreational management in the Gulf of Mexico can be found at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.